

Grace Episcopal Church
Scripture 202

Chapter 1: Bible and Western Culture

Sections: Roots, Influence

Fant, Chapter 1

Western Culture: (p 21 - 22)

If we are to talk about Western culture then we have to talk about the Bible as a central part of its literary heritage.

According to Fant the primary sources that have provided the foundations of our western culture are:

- Greco – Roman tradition
- Jewish and Christian tradition
- the modern sciences

Culture = language, science, art, philosophy, government, law, beliefs, customs, habits, and technologies. These are passed down to the generations.

(Some transmission of culture is good, some is not. Meatloaf recipe.)

Cultures are inherently conservative in that they conserve past achievement. Lasting cultures have to be dynamic, revising and reinterpreting their historical traditions in light of new challenges.

Culture follows the conquering. Alex the Great conquered Palestine in 4 century BCE. Greek culture dominated. Jewish people dispersed through out that empire. Romans conquered in mid – 100s BCE – not much happened because Rome took a lot of Greek culture. Christianity emerged from Judaism in first century AD/CE. Constantine embraced Christianity in 4th century.

What would be a Greco -Roman influence? What would be a Jewish Christian influence?

Dante summary:

Greco-Roman: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance

Judeo-Christian: faith, hope, love

Even in our theology, immortality of the soul vs resurrection of the body.

Since the 1700s, science has shaped the culture and sometimes with conflicting views of theology.

Cultural Influence of the Bible (p 23-28)

Bible has influenced Western religion, politics, law, art, literature, ethics, language,

history, and religion. Moral conduct, theological beliefs, worship, and ritual.

Radical monotheism stands against any religion with multiple deities and in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam has it as a bed rock. For good or for ill.

Politics and Law:

Western civilization use the Bible as the basis for their code of governing and legal system. Christianity was the state religion of Europe for 1800 to 2000 years.

Religious communities have been formed throughout the ages with a calling to the Bible as a basis for formation. The Protestant Reformation had many communities being formed on interpreted bible tenants.

Much of Westerner still believe their nation prospers to the extent that citizens follow the teaching of the Bible. Note American culture.

Art:

Much of Middle age art and music was shaped by the stories in the bible.

Literature:

Bible has influenced the writings of the culture: Dante, Milton, Bunyan, Herzog, C.S. Lewis, Eliot, Auden, Greek, Wiesel, O'Connor, Warren, Percy.

Ethics:

Most ethical practice in Western society has a claim to have a biblical basis. The Ten Commandments, Sermon on the Mount, Paul, the Hebrew prophets, etc.

Pacifism, just war, sex, marriage, property rights, personal rights, justice, love, family, liberation, fighting injustice call upon Scriptures as its base.

Language:

(what are some biblical phrases that are still in common use today?)

History:

How many times the history of the bible is used as a context for historical movements or justification of actions both good and ill.

Bible in its many forms continues to be a best seller among literate people.